

He wrote many valuable books, and preached many sermons, which made a wonderful impression upon the great mass of the people. But his greatest work, from whatever point it may be viewed, was his translation of the Bible. Before that time the people had not had the Bible in their own language. That read in the churches was in Latin. The priests did little preaching so the people knew very little of the Bible and its teaching.

Luther translated the whole Bible into the best form of the language of his day. One result of that was to give the language a standard, just as the King James Version gave one to the English language, and it has never gotten very far from it. But its great value was in the fact that in his translation the people could have the Bible, which had been denied them by the Church, and could read and study it for themselves.

Luther died in 1546 at the age of sixty-two. Few men ever influenced more people for good in their day than did Martin Luther, and few men have influenced as many through succeeding ages. His influence was not and is not limited to Germany, but has been and is still being felt in all Christian lands, and there are many who rejoice that he lived and fought so valiently for the truth.

#### LUTHER'S CONVERSION.

By this use of the word is not meant his becoming a Christian, for it is not known when he first accepted the Saviour. But it is used to refer to his acceptance of the great truth of God's great plan of salvation.

Luther had gone on a visit to Rome a devout member and priest in the Church of Rome. Though dissatisfied with the teachings of some of the representatives of that Church with whom he had been thrown, he still believed in the Church. He was, therefore, much delighted with the privilege of visiting the Holy City. His conception of what he expected to find was rudely shaken, and he became very much disgusted with what he saw. Still he was faithful to the Church and believed that he ought to follow its teachings and practices.

In Rome was a famous stairway, which the authorities of the Church claimed had been brought from Pilate's judgment hall at Jerusalem. They said that our Saviour walked down these steps as he started to his crucifixion. It was taught that one would receive great spiritual merit if he climbed up and down these steps on his knees.

Luther had not at that time broken off the shackles of the superstitions of the Church. So he did as many others had done. He determined to win the merit that would come from climbing these Sacred Stairs. With great humility he started. When about half way up he seemed to hear a voice speaking to him and saying: "The just shall live by faith." He stopped where he was, and the thought came surging through his great mind that salvation could not be won by any such foolish and useless acts as he was then performing, or by any other work that he might do; but that a sinner could only be saved by God's grace, and that all that God required of him was to put his faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Immediately he arose and, standing erect,

he walked down the steps, instead of coming down on his knees as he had expected to do.

He returned home, and from that time preached with wonderful effect the doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, who died to pay the debt of sin and to make atonement with God the Father for the sinner who will accept His offer of mercy and forgiveness.

#### LUTHER'S REFORMS.

The great reformation of four centuries ago, as the name implies, was a movement to bring the Church back in faith and in practice to Christ and the apostles. That this was done is proved by the rapid spread, like true leaven, of the influences of Luther and the other Reformers.

The hammer blows struck on the door of the old Castle Church in Wittenberg, October 31, 1517, echoed into every section of the civilized world and have re-echoed down the ages to these days of the

Quadracentennial of that historic nailing of the famous Luther Theses.

The Protestant Reformation movement was by no means a German movement. In Switzerland, France and later in England similar activities occurred. It was an evangelical movement intended to reach men of all tongues; hence one of Luther's first acts was to stop the reading of masses in Latin and to give to his German brethren the gospel in their own language. The idea caught fire and spread rapidly. Begun in 1517 in Germany, the evangelical principle of Protestantism was planted in Sweden by 1525; Denmark and Norway, 1537; Iceland, 1551; Livonia, Esthonia and Russia, 1520, its triumph in Courland, Russia, being complete by 1539. It spread to Hungary in 1606, Bohemia and Moravia 1609. It had a strong hold in Austria in 1528. Its influence was strong in England—so strong, in fact, that King Henry VII. in 1522 wrote against the teachings of the Monk of Wittenberg. In parliament legislated to keep out the Lutheran influence. In both France and Spain there were many followers of Luther as early as 1523. Already in 1519 Luther's books were in great demand even in Italy. Lutherans were martyred in Antwerp, Holland, as early as 1523. The Augsburg Confession was found in Constantinople in 1559.

Thus the faith of Luther rapidly spread practically throughout all Europe, which, being at that time the continent of highest civilization and intelligence, the Lutheran faith soon became the champion of intellectual development and missionary endeavor.

A certain amount of opposition is a great help to a man; kites rise against and not with the wind.



Luther and Family.

#### LUTHERAN GROWTH.

When Christopher Columbus discovered America a miner's son in Germany was singing for bread that he might pursue his education, which was to fit him for developing the seeds of liberty which were destined to find root and largest growth in the Western Hemisphere, a love of liberty which promises today to prove the dominating force to liberalize the governments of the world and insure world freedom and world peace.

Lutherans very early had their representatives in America. In point of fact a Lutheran minister and a company of Danish Lutheran sailors came to America the year before the Pilgrim Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock.

#### First Settlers.

Holland Lutherans were among the first settlers in what is now Greater New York, while Swedish Lutherans were on the Delaware to greet and shake the hand of William Penn when he arrived to establish Pennsylvania. German Lutherans, too, came quite early in the history of the country. They were here in large numbers before the Revolution and furnished some of the stalwart troops who fought the battles for American liberty. Most notable among these were the Muhlenbergs, whose father, the Rev. Henry Melchir Muhlenberg, organized the first Lutheran Synod in America as early as 1748.

The Lutheran Patriarch, a monument to whom as the founder of Lutheranism in America is to be unveiled on the grounds of the Philadelphia Seminary at Mount Airy in October, had three sons whose career illustrates the spirit of the early Lutherans in helping to make America. Peter was the famous general who threw off his preacher's robe, stepped down from the pulpit, enrolled nearly all his men as members of the colonial army and became one of Washington's chief aids. His brother Frederick was the first speaker of the House of Representatives, while the third brother, also a Lutheran clergyman, was the most eminent botanist in America in his day.

#### Growth.

From these humble beginnings auspicious because of the typical Americanism of the leaders in Colonial Lutheranism, there has been a constant growth, at first slow, but gradually



Burning the Pope's Bull.

increasing until for a generation past Lutherans have been the most rapidly growing Protestant body in America.

The latest available statistics give them 65 Synods, 9,831 ministers, 15,069 congregations, 3,774,774 baptized members. Their church property in this country is worth in round numbers \$125,000,000.

#### Typically American.

Lutherans in America today are typically American in this that they count their ad-